

“The meaning of the Ochoa affair”

(16 years after the collapse of the Stalin-led Soviet regime and their wreckage of its economy by the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy cum ‘nomenclatura’ pillaging of state assets, Castro renews his peace with the ‘loyal’ Stalinist Cuban Communist Party! But the legacy of his struggle with the CCP remains on the record: “Fidel Castro Denounces Bureaucracy and Sectarianism {1962—the pamphlet on file from this website}

(As well, see the following article describing the severe crises in the Cuban Revolution resulting from the inherited and imposed Stalinist influence.

“The meaning of the Ochoa affair”

(by Janette Habel, in International Viewpoint #173, November 13, 1989

(journal of the Fourth International –ed.)

"THIS revolution will not be like Saturn; it will not devour its own children." Is this prediction of Fidel Castro's out of date? In July and August 1989, General Arnaldo Ochoa, a hero of the republic, was executed along with three officers from the Ministry of the Interior, while four Ministers have been stripped of their functions Including the interior minister and Communist Party Central Committee member, Jose Abrantes. The latter, despite a public reaffirmation of confidence by Castro in June, was sentenced to 20 years in prison a few weeks after the execution of Ochoa. His arrest was followed by that of other officials of his ministry, and many others were demoted. The ministry has thus been more or less dismantled,

NEVER have historic cadres of the regime taken such a beating This time most of those affected were not old Communist officials accused of sectarianism or complicity with Moscow but root and branch Fidelistas. That is what makes this crisis the most serious that the Cuban leadership has yet experienced.

(At the same time, this episode demonstrates the fundamental superiority of the Cuban leadership over it's Stalinist mentors in its desire and ability to correct and stem bureaucracy – and the inevitable corruption stemming from it – thus restoring it's revolutionary integrity –ed.)

Dealings in currency and ivory in Angola by “internationalist” fighters, embezzlement by the Cuban chargés s'affaires in Panama, fraud and drug trafficking. These were the bases of the accusations of “negligence in carrying out duties, corruption, improper use of resources and

illegal appropriations of state funds for purposes outside the functions of the Ministry of the Interior ... and to the creation of unauthorized enterprises involved in activities related to foreign trade.”

(...)

Cuban communist party purged

Punishments must be exemplary, and the party itself should not escape. It must be not only the subject but also the "the object of the rectification," (Granma, Aug. 10, 1989 – journal of the Cuban armed forces –ed.) inasmuch as the negative tendencies "have generally not been exposed through the party." The first measures were soon to strike the CCP. A purge has been carried out through a check of party cards. More than 400,000 party members have been interviewed by members of higher bodies and by their cell comrades. More than 6,000 have received disciplinary punishments, and some 2,000 expelled. The most common reason why these punishments have been inflicted is for violating the statutes (about 40%) and then for carelessness and lack of discipline at work (31%).

The Cuban leadership has related the Ochoa trial and its aftermath to the rectification process. The latter has therefore been accelerated at the political level, at a time when at the economic level it is marked by numerous ambiguities. This acceleration can only be understood in the light of the worsening of disputes within the state apparatus. These can be described schematically as a conflict between the Castroist leading nucleus and its supporters and the new generation of technocrats and officials, often influenced by Moscow, who are increasingly challenging the "outdated and "voluntarist" (as one top official put it) leadership style of the Fidelista team.

Of course, under these tensions lie social and economic problems that have been aggravated by (Soviet premier) Gorbachev's policies. But they are also the specific product of the Cuban power structure and of the duality of powers that exists at the top of the state as a result of the historic development and the revolutionary process.

Any analysis that doesn't start from this history, or equates the Cuban leadership with the bureaucratic dictatorships of the East European countries, cannot explain the current evolution. The Castroist group (evidently Castro himself but also including the faithful veterans of the Sierra Maestra) has not come out of a bureaucratic apparatus, even if through their method of functioning, they have produced one. In its origins, its preoccupations and its methods, the Castro leadership is different.

(...)

(The IV article continues, explaining the qualitative difference between the Stalinist-engendered “workers’ states” and the Cuban state, a revolution won by the masses through an insurrection led by the Castroist July 26 Movement and enjoying mass support spurred on by the necessity to defend itself against sustained U.S. imperialist threats – while simultaneously engaging in fundamental improvements in its people’s welfare, even extending to exporting substantial medical assistance to neighbouring Latin American states –ed.)

(Additional website editorial comment:)

As well, in an unprecedented initiative by a “workers’ state” (pre-socialist state economy) since the Russian Revolution of 1917, Cuba engaged in attempt to intervene militarily in African politics. This episode is documented in Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara: The African Dream – the diaries of the revolutionary war in the Congo (Grove Press books, New York, 1999).

From the cover digest: “Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara was one of the greatest exemplars of the revolutionary 1960s, an essential player in the Cuban Revolution whose legend fired the imaginations of a whole generation. In 1965, amid worldwide conjecture, Guevara left Cuba, where he was a minister in Fidel Castro’s post-revolutionary government, and traveled incognito to the heart of Africa. People’s hero Patrice Lumumba had been assassinated, and Guevara was sent to put his theories of guerrilla warfare into use, helping the oppressed people of the Congo throw off the yoke of Western imperialism. The first task was to assist the young Laurent Kabila in his struggle against Mobutu and Tshombe, the two key figures in the newly independent nation.” (This Cuban crusade in support of the African revolution demonstrates its internationalism on a level not seen since the Bolshevik’s (also unsuccessful) attempts after 1917—ed)

(end of article)